**Vision Science Section**

**American Academy of Optometry**

**Diplomate Candidacy Guide**

This guide contains the requirements and procedures for becoming a Diplomate in the Vision Science Section of the American Academy of Optometry. Becoming a Diplomate of the American Academy of Optometry is a distinction achieved by a Doctor of Optometry or Vision Scientist who strives to attain a level of excellence beyond the American Academy of Optometry Fellowship program. The Vision Science Section invites Academy Fellows with an interest in vision science to become a candidate for Diplomate in Vision Science.

The purpose of the Diplomate program in the Vision Science Section is to award Diplomate status to those individuals who contribute significantly to one or several areas of basic or applied vision science research, including but not limited to: anatomy, physiology, electrophysiology, biochemistry, molecular biology, microbiology, immunology, genetics, optics, bioengineering, development, psychophysics, eye growth and refractive error development, cognitive psychology, and oculomotor systems.

The mission of the Vision Science Section is to foster and disseminate both clinical and basic science research from the molecular to the intact system level of the visual system as it relates to visual function in health and disease. Vision science helps to drive forward the profession of optometry and what is known about the visual system. Any member of the AAO can be a member of the Vision Science Section, and any Fellow can apply for Diplomate in Vision Science. Vision Science section members include, but are not limited to, clinician researchers, basic science researchers, and vision science students at schools of optometry and in vision science programs.

**Eligibility**

**To apply to become a Diplomate candidate in the Vision Science section, you must:**

1. Be a Fellow in good standing of the American Academy of Optometry, demonstrate leadership in optometry and vision science, and exhibit commitment to the American Academy of Optometry and its mission
2. Have contributed substantially to the body of knowledge relating to a specific area in vision science
3. Candidates must have a minimum of ten points, achieved through having published ten peer-reviewed manuscripts on a vision science topic, having been awarded NIH funding, or through obtaining patents on vision-related inventions. Ten points should consist of:
   * Published manuscripts in leading peer-reviewed vision science journals as first author, corresponding author, or supervising author (1 point each, up to 10 points)
   * K, R, or U NIH (or comparable) funding (1 point each, up to 2 points)
   * Vision science-related patent (1 point each, up to 2 points)
4. Submit the online application by April 15 to initiate the process for that calendar year (see proposed timeline below)
5. Be involved in vision research with or without a vision science-related degree; there is no pre-requisite to have either a research-related degree (such as MS or PhD) or an Optometry qualification.
6. To apply:
   * Submit an online application at <https://diplomate.aaopt.org/Fellow>
   * Upload a curriculum vitae
   * Once approved by the Vision Science section diplomate chair, pay the application fee of $100 online

**Requirements**

**Once the chair has approved the application and the fee is submitted, the remaining three criteria should be completed within three to five years**

1. Provide a written research career summary (approximately 5-7 pages) that emphasizes the candidate’s vision science-related research activities. This document should provide details about the candidate’s research accomplishments and the impact that research has had on the field of vision science. Specific items to address include but are not limited to:

a. Overall summary of vision science research and resulting publications

b. Current research activities and plans for further research

c. Quality of journals where the candidate’s papers are published (with quality defined by accepted ranking systems such as journal impact factor, SJR indicator)

d. Number of citations associated with publications

e. History of funding/grants

f. Editorial assignments (e.g. journal editor, study section)

g. Invited scientific presentations

h. Graduate student pedigree (detailed history describing academic, research, and professional success of mentored graduate students)

i. Percent effort dedicated to research

j. Academic rank

k. Impact of research: Candidates should describe how their research has influenced the field of vision science. Items such as stimulation of new avenues of research, novel ideas, and unexpected relationships discovered should be discussed and explored. The candidate should also demonstrate in detail the influence of their work on others (e.g. collaborations; mentorships; contributions of their students/post-docs and citations of their work).

1. Submit a publication quality scholarly scientific review article to the above mentioned committee on a topic and outline to be agreed upon by the committee and the candidate before starting to write the paper.
   1. The candidate will submit three topics of interest and together with the committee, the final topic will be decided
   2. The paper should be approximately 6,000 words in length, following the guidelines of the Academy’s journal, Optometry and Vision Science
   3. The paper must be a review
   4. The candidate will submit an outline to be reviewed and approved by the Vision Science diplomat committee. The diplomate committee will evaluate the outline for the following:

* Depth and breadth of coverage of the topic
* Background information on basic mechanisms
* Potential for development into a scholarly paper
* Time and effort involved in producing a paper from the outline

e. An electronic copy of the completed paper will be submitted to the Vision Science diplomat committee chair, who will send this to the committee members.

f. The candidate will be encouraged to ultimately submit the paper to a peer-reviewed vision science journal, preferably to Optometry and Vision Science

3. Pass an oral interview conducted by the Vision Science Section Diplomate Committee, focused on your area of expertise and general knowledge of topics within the scope of your area of research.

a. The oral examination will only be offered after the candidate’s written research summary and scientific paper are accepted by the Diplomate Committee. To be considered for the oral examination in that year, the written research summary and the scientific review paper will need to be submitted by July 1st for review, revisions, and final approval during that calendar year.

b. The purpose of the oral examination is to provide an opportunity for the candidate to more fully reveal their knowledge, accomplishments, and future research and teaching aspirations. The candidate should expect to defend all aspects of their submitted review paper, discuss its relevance and importance within the field of vision science, describe how their overall body of work should and will influence future research activity, and how the candidate will contribute to the unique mission of the American Academy of Optometry and the Vision Science Section.

c. The oral examination will be conducted by the Vision Science Section Diplomate Committee with an expected duration of 60-90 minutes. This examination will be graded as pass/fail based on consensus from the Diplomate Committee.

As a candidate for Vision Science diplomate status under the above procedures, you must complete the requirements within five years of application and payment of the application fee. If you have not completed the process within this time period, a new application process, including payment of a new application fee, must be initiated.

**Review process**

Your application will be reviewed by the Vision Science Diplomate Committee, consisting of:

1. Diplomate Chair

2. Sub-Committee Chair based on exam type examination (e.g., written paper submission, oral examination, and diplomate renewal)

3. Vision Science Section member with knowledge and expertise in your area of research interest, appointed by the Diplomate Chair

**Ongoing Contribution**

Vision Science Section Research Diplomates are expected to support the AAO and Vision Science Section missions, including acceptance of responsibilities and leadership in lecturing, writing, and teaching within the Academy and within the Vision Science Section. Diplomates are also expected to participate in Annual Academy Meetings and must renew their qualifications every five years as required by the Academy, detailed at <http://www.aaopt.org/fellows/diplomate_renewal>

**Proposed Timeline for Diplomate Process**

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| **Year 1** | |
| Submit online application with CV | April 15 of year 1 |
| Meet with Diplomate Chair | annual meeting |
| **Year 2** | |
| Submit written research summary  Submit five topics for the review paper | on or before July 1 of year 2 |
| Meet with Diplomate Chair  Finalize topic | annual meeting |
| **Years 3-5** | |
| Submit outline | on or before April 15 of year 3 |
| Outline revised or approved  Begin paper preparation | two weeks after outline submission |
| Submit paper | July 1 of year 3, 4, or 5\* |
| Paper review and revision | July 1 – October 1 of year 3, 4, or 5\* |
| Notify Diplomate Chair of intent to sit for oral exam | July 1 of year 3, 4, or 5\* |
| Oral exam | Annual meeting of year 3, 4, or 5 |

\*can be completed in year 3, 4, or 5, but must be by July 1 to be considered for oral exam of that year